

ABOUT FLOWERS.

On a visit to Cannes last February, we saw quantities of flowers being grown and packed, principally for the London and Paris markets.

It was most interesting to observe this industry and see how it is carried on. All the surroundings of Cannes seem to be flower gardens terraced out on the hillside. There grew narcissi, carnations, roses, marguerites, anemonies, while the mimosa trees were dazzling, covered as they were with bright yellow feathery blossoms. In the "boutiques" up the narrow alleys of Cannes, packers are busy packing the fragrant harvests into the light wattle baskets so familiar to us here in the streets of London.

In one shed there was nothing but mimosa being packed, in another carnations and violets and so on. Up the hillside one day I saw a number of peasants busily engaged in breaking off huge branches of mimosa and collecting all the blossoms. On asking the reason for this I was told it was in order to make scent, and on enquiry we discovered that one-fifth of the scent in the world is manufactured at Grasse, a little town up in the hills about ten miles from Cannes, which proves what a flower country this is. I did not see a great variety of wild flowers, it being too early in the year. There was, however, a quantity of tall, white heather, and towards Grasse, up in the hills, crowds of scented wild violets and a few crimson anemones.

Around Cannes I also found a kind of lavender-scented herb, with sessile perpendicular rows of little dull purple flowers and one large sterile bright purple flower on top, evidently used as a sign-post for the insects to ensure fertilization. One day we explored the Esterelle Hills, a volcanic range lying to the west of Cannes. These hills, which are composed of a beautiful porphyry-like stone, were clothed in pine and cork forests, with an undergrowth of deliciously sweet myrtle. The pines are a vivid green in colour, with large sessile cones in the axils of the branches.

These cones are sold for firing in the neighbourhood of Cannes. We also noticed how the bark of the cork trees had been removed. A ring of bark about two feet wide is cut each year, and then it is allowed to grow again.

I only found one wild flower here—a small kind of Genista. On an excursion to the "Lérins," two verdure-clad islands lying in the Mediterranean off Cannes, I found a yellow stonecrop of trailing habit, and with a strong scent, growing over the rocks of the sea shore. I also found a pretty arum with brown striped curved spathe and a heart-shaped green leaf. Speaking of arums, I have noticed that there are two kinds in this neighbourhood; one with an arrow-shaped green leaf and the other a blunter leaf with spots. There is a pretty legend connected with the arum. The spotted leaves are said to be due to its being one of the plants which grew under the cross of Christ and were spotted with drops of blood.

Another pretty legend is that of the Sain'foin, that beautiful leguminous flower with which the fields about here blush in June. It is said that the manger in Bethlehem was filled with the hay of this plant, and when the Holy Babe was laid therein it burst into blossom. Hence the name Saint Foin, or holy hay.

To close with yet another flower legend, that of the Veronica. Once upon a time a wanderer, the son of Latin father and a Greek mother, looked down from the blue sky at which he had been gazing and saw at his feet what seemed to him a perfect representation of the cerulean hues above. For there was a bed of blue speedwell that had caught the blue of the summer skies. "Vera Eikon" he called the little flower—"true picture"—framed in the green earth, of the blue skies above.

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